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Realism and Representation: The Case of Rembrandt's Hat

Michael Morris

Abstract: Some artistic representations—the painting of a hat in a famous picture by Rembrandt is an example—are able to present vividly the character of what they represent precisely by calling attention to their medium of representation. There is a puzzle about this whose structure, I argue, is analogous to that of a familiar Kantian problem for traditional realism. I offer a precise characterization of the puzzle, before arguing that an analogue for the case of representation to the Kantian solution to the problem for traditional realism is implausible. I offer an alternative solution to the puzzle about representation which also explains why we should be interested in artistic representation in the first place. I close with the outline of a possible realist response to the traditional Kantian problem.

1. The Problem

In the famous self-portrait in Kenwood House in London, Rembrandt is wearing a soft (though possibly starched) cloth hat. My concern is with the way the hat is painted, and what that way of painting achieves. The hat is painted in thick paint, with brushstrokes of astonishing simplicity and confidence. Creamy white paint is applied thickly, almost in slabs, not always covering the darker wash beneath. It is impossible not to notice the use of the paint: it calls attention to itself. But precisely in calling attention to itself it succeeds in vividly depicting something distinct from it, something in the real world: a certain kind of hat made of a certain kind of cloth, whose texture is quite unlike that of the greasy paint in the picture. Somehow the very conspicuousness of the way of painting reveals vividly the quite different texture of a kind of real cloth, something we can come across quite independently of painting.

This case is interesting because it is an example of a general phenomenon: artistic representations are often particularly effective at presenting the character of something in the real world precisely in virtue of calling attention to some feature of the medium of representation—and so, one might think, distracting one’s attention from the real world. The phenomenon is very obvious in the surface of paintings like the Rembrandt self-portrait, but it can also be found in striking effects of composition in all representational art forms, as well as in features peculiar to different representational media.

There is clearly a psychological question of how it is that this effect is created, but that is not my concern. My concern is with the philosophical question of how it is possible for an artistic representation which calls attention to itself nevertheless to represent so vividly a feature of the real world. I will argue that the fundamental problem here is structurally similar to a problem in general metaphysics which Kantians have taken to undermine a traditional form of realism. But the parallel for the case of artistic representation to the Kantian solution to the problem in general metaphysics is just not plausible. So I offer an alternative solution to the problem in artistic representation. This provides at least the structure of a possible non-Kantian solution to the problem in general metaphysics, which would remove the difficulty which Kantians have taken to undermine traditional realism.

2. What the Issue is Not

In order to see that the philosophical issue here is structurally similar to a problem in general metaphysics, we need to keep it separate from a number of more familiar issues in philosophical aesthetics.

Our problem is to understand how it is that precisely in virtue of calling attention to its own medium an artistic representation can be good as a way of depicting something in the

real world. That immediately separates this issue from anything that might be raised in connection with Richard Wollheim's famous 'twofold thesis'—the thesis that a proper appreciation of a painting requires one to experience simultaneously both the painted surface and what is 'seen-in' it (Wollheim 1980: 213-4). The key point is that the fundamental relation I am concerned with is not the same as the one Wollheim is concerned with. This is because Wollheim is trying to characterize 'seeing-in', and what is 'seen-in' a painting, in Wollheim's sense, is something which (to put it reasonably cautiously) need not be a real thing of its kind. Someone may 'see- ' a naked boy 'in' a painting, for example,¹ even if there is no real boy of whom the painting is a painting.² In this respect, what is 'seen-in' a painting stands to the paint on its surface roughly as a character in a novel stands to the words on its pages.³

But the problem I am concerned with is quite unlike this: it is a problem about the relation between the medium of representation and something which *is* a real thing of its kind—in our case a certain kind of real cloth, and a certain kind of real hat.⁴ The whole point is that it is a real kind of cloth and a real kind of hat. (And, of course, I move to speaking of *kinds* of cloth and hat precisely to be sure that there really are such things.)

Since the problem I am concerned with should not be aligned with what is involved in 'seeing-in' in Wollheim's sense, *a fortiori* it should not be assimilated to the issue of what has been called 'inflected seeing-in'. Robert Hopkins's helpful account describes 'inflected seeing-in' as 'seeing-in' for which 'what is seen-in a surface includes properties a full characterization of which needs to make sense of that surface's design (conceived as such)' (Hopkins 2010: 158). 'Inflected seeing-in' requires a special intimacy between the surface (as it is experienced) and what is 'seen-in' it, but it remains a relation (or experienced relation)

between the surface of a painting and something which (still following the earlier formulation) need not be a real thing of its kind; so it is irrelevant to our problem.⁵

Our problem is this: how can calling attention to the medium be good precisely as a way of vividly depicting the real world? Of course, depictions of the real world can be good in all kinds of way. A certain use of paint, for example, might be just intrinsically attractive, quite independently of what it is used to depict. It might be, for example, that we just naturally like certain colours and textures. And perhaps Rembrandt's use of paint in the depiction of the hat here is attractive in just this kind of way. If that were so, then perhaps we could explain how this use of paint might be instrumentally effective in a depiction of a hat: the intrinsic attractiveness of the colour and the texture of the paint might be enough to hold our eye, and as a result we are made to dwell on the picture and so, perhaps, learn more about the hat which is depicted.

Or again, we might see in the brushwork something of the character of the gesture which created it: the gesture was bold and flamboyant, we might think, and we take the brushwork to be bold and flamboyant too. Why should we not think that ways of depicting which express features of character which we admire are good ways of depicting? We admire boldness and flamboyance, so it seems reasonable to think that bold and flamboyant painting is a good way of depicting something.

But neither of these virtues of depiction is the virtue I have in mind, and attending to them has no obvious relevance to the problem I am concerned with. The reason is that neither of these virtues is specific: each is simply a virtue in a way of painting as a way of depicting something or other. It does not matter what is depicted in that way: these virtues, insofar as they are virtues, will enhance the value of a way of painting, whatever is depicted in that way of painting. But the point about Rembrandt's way of painting his hat was

precisely that it is an excellent way of depicting a hat of that specific kind, made of cloth of that specific kind.⁶

Again: the problem I am concerned with is relatively localized. There are, of course, other ways in which the apparent boldness and flamboyance of the brushwork are plausibly seen both as central to the painting's artistic aims, and as concerned with its relation to the real world. These strong, broad strokes, which we might naturally take to be expressive of defiance, contrast strikingly but productively with the unblinking steadiness of the gaze of the man who looks back from the canvas. The complex attitudes here expressed in the picture are naturally thought to be important in the depiction of something real: something complex about the human situation, for example. But our problem concerns a separable relation between just one part of the painting and the real world: the use of those brushstrokes to depict a real-world kind of hat.

There is one issue of central importance to contemporary philosophical aesthetics which is relevant to our problem, however. As I said at the outset, this feature of this painting is interesting as an example of a more general phenomenon. Wherever we can make sense of a medium of representation, we should be able to find examples of artistic representations which are good at representing something real—something clearly external to representation—precisely because they call attention to the medium of representation.⁷ If this virtue is to be found in all forms of artistic representation, then making sense of it should have a benefit beyond that of just solving a philosophical problem: we might hope to explain something, at least, of the point of engaging in and with artistic representation at all—to explain why we might want to represent the world artistically, rather than just look at it.⁸

3. Making the Problem Explicit

Our problem is a problem of a familiar philosophical kind: we want to know how anything *could* work in this way. The source of this kind of philosophical problem is a latent, undiagnosed tension in our views: we have the vague feeling that we hold assumptions which contradict each other, although we are not yet clear what they are.⁹ We get properly clear about a problem of this kind by identifying the apparently contradictory assumptions explicitly. That is what we need to do now.

First, let us introduce some terminology. Let us call ways of representing the real world which call attention to their own medium of representation *conspicuous* ways of representing, or *conspicuous* representations. And we are concerned with a particular virtue of conspicuous representations: the virtue which remains once we have discounted simple gustatory values (such as delight in the texture of the paint, just as such), and any values that might be associated with expression (such as the value of the flamboyance or boldness of a gesture). Let us call this the *basic* virtue of these representations.

What kind of virtue might this basic virtue of conspicuous representations be? It is a virtue of conspicuous representation *just as* a way of representing something in the real world—in our case, a certain kind of cloth hat. Once gustatory and expressive values have been ruled out, it is hard to see how this can be anything other than a cognitive virtue: a virtue of getting us to know or understand something. Let us call this *cognitivism* about the basic virtue of conspicuous representation. Here is an explicit formulation of it:

(Cog) The basic virtue of conspicuous representation is that it enables us to understand the world.¹⁰

Cognitivism about the basic virtue of conspicuous representation makes it intelligible that this basic virtue is a virtue, because it relates it to something we value anyway. And it is in any case natural to think that art provides us with a distinctive and valuable kind of

understanding of the world. We feel that we have come to understand something better when we have spent time with great art, and the depth that great art seems to have seems to match the depth of the understanding which we seem to gain from it. Moreover, this point applies to the producers as well as to the consumers—the hearers, readers, or viewers—of artistic representation. The representational artist naturally takes her interest in what she is representing to be an interest in understanding it.¹¹

But now suppose that I am right in what I claimed at the end of the last section: that understanding the basic virtue of conspicuous representation will enable us to explain something of the point of engaging in and with artistic representation in the first place. Call that the *generality assumption*. The generality assumption seems to put some constraints on what it is about the world which conspicuous representation enables us to understand.

The constraints are stronger, of course, the more generally important we think artistic representation is. Suppose, for example, that we think the point of artistic representation is just that it gives a certain kind of pleasure to those of a certain temperament. If we think this is the point of artistic representation, we need not expect any very ambitious understanding of the world to be provided by conspicuous representations. It would be enough, for example, if conspicuous representation enabled us to understand the world *as* the source of that distinctive kind of pleasure.

But those who are seriously committed to the value of art are likely to think artistic representation has a more fundamental importance than that. They are likely to think that artistic representation does something whose value can be acknowledged without engaging with artistic representation (even if we cannot understand that artistic representation does it without that kind of engagement). Call that the *ambitious* understanding of the generality assumption.¹²

(Cog) itself is well suited to this ambitious reading of the generality assumption: understanding the world is something which we can see some value in quite independently of artistic representation. It is important to remember here that we do not generally think that the value of understanding the world is just that it enables us to predict and manipulate it more effectively. Anyone who has a taste for philosophy or theoretical science is already committed to a value of understanding the world which is not merely instrumental. But (Cog) has to be read in a particular way if we are to use it to express the generality assumption on the ambitious understanding of it. The world which conspicuous representation enables us to understand must be the real world—not a world reshaped by any project of representation, or a world understood as a projection of some means of representation. Let us introduce some technical terminology, and say that the world *as it is in itself* is the world *as it is altogether independently of being represented*.¹³ Then the form of cognitivism which we need for the ambitious reading of the generality assumption is this:

(Cog1) The basic virtue of conspicuous representation is that it enables us to understand the world as it is in itself.

If we accept (Cog1), we are committed to this:

(A) Good conspicuous representations enable us to understand the world as it is in itself.

And now we can see our problem. The difficulty is that because conspicuous representations (by definition) draw attention to their own means of representation, it seems that the understanding they provide must involve some relation to that means of representation. So it looks as if we must accept this:

(B) Conspicuous representations can only enable us to understand the world as it stands to their own means of representation.

But (B) seems to flatly contradict (A). And that is the problem raised by the brushwork of Rembrandt's hat. Let us call it the *problem of conspicuous representation*.

4. Anti-Realist Solutions

Once the problem of conspicuous representation is shown to lie in the apparent tension between (A) and (B), we can see that it is structurally similar to a familiar Kantian problem for a traditional form of realism. We can formulate the Kantian problem as a problem about the apparent tension between these two claims:

(A*) Our ways of knowing enable us to understand the world as it is in itself;

(B*) Our ways of knowing can only enable us to understand the world as it stands
them.

(Obviously, in (A*) the phrase 'world as it is in itself' has to be understood in its usual general sense (roughly: *as it is altogether independently of being thought or represented*), rather than as meaning, specifically, *as it is altogether independently of being represented*.)

Kant's response (according to most natural interpretations of (Kant 1997))¹⁴ was to deny or modify (A*), though there is dispute about what he actually proposed. It is natural, then, to suggest that the way to resolve the problem of conspicuous representation is to deny or modify (A). This would be to carry over to the special case of representation a form of anti-realism which has its home in general metaphysics—in our conception of the relation between mind and the world. I will now argue that, whatever its plausibility in general metaphysics, this form of anti-realism is very unattractive for the special case of representation: it is not plausible to deny that what conspicuous representations enable us to understand is altogether independent of being represented.

I will consider the adaptation of two Kantian modifications to (A*) to the special case of representation. First, then, we might interpret Kant as suggesting that although the *object* of our understanding when we think about the world is altogether independent of our thought, nevertheless the *way the object is understood as being* is not: the character which we understand the world to have depends, in part, and in some way, on the cognitive constitution which we bring to it.¹⁵ Transferring this thought to the case of representation, we might try to distinguish between the *object* of the understanding which a representation provides, on the one hand, and the *way that object is represented as being*, on the other. Thus we might say that the thing in the real world which is depicted by that brushwork in the Rembrandt self-portrait is indeed altogether independent of being represented, but the way that thing is represented as being is not.

Unfortunately, transposing this form of anti-realism to the case of representation looks untenable for every obvious way that the object is represented as being—at least on an ordinary conception of what is represented and how it is represented as being. (There is an issue about this ‘ordinary’ conception, of course: I will return to it at the end of section 6.) The object of representation is represented as being a hat, as being made of cloth of a certain texture and colour, as having certain folds in it, and so on. But all of these features of the hat seem quite independent of being represented. Perhaps we should be more cautious, in order to avoid begging the question against more general forms of anti-realism: perhaps we should say just that they are quite independent of being represented *in paint*. But their being independent of representation in paint is enough to undermine this way of developing an anti-realist response to our puzzle: we only need to reformulate both (A) and (B) to address the particular case of conspicuous representation in paint for the problem to recur. It is not just that we ordinarily think of being a hat, being made of cloth of a certain texture, and so on, as features which are quite independent of being represented in paint: that independence of

being represented in paint is integral to the virtue of conspicuous representation in paint.

What is interesting about conspicuous representation is precisely that calling attention to the medium is good as a way of representing objects and qualities which are altogether independent of the medium.

Let us, then, consider a second anti-realist approach. We might interpret Kant as holding that there are different kinds of feature or aspect of objects: some features the objects have in themselves, independently of any relation to our understanding; but some the objects have only insofar as our cognitive faculties are applied to them.¹⁶ We might transpose this form of Kantianism to the problem of conspicuous representation and just attempt to question the independence of being represented of *at least some* of the ways that the object is represented as being.¹⁷

In order to do this, we need some idea of the kind of dependence on being represented which might be at issue. We want some parallel for the case of representation to a case in general metaphysics in which some feature of the world might plausibly be thought to be in some way mind-dependent. Secondary qualities are the obvious example. Consider, then, a view of secondary qualities like John McDowell's (McDowell 1985: 111-112):

[A]n object's being red is understood as obtaining in virtue of the object's being such as (in certain circumstances) to look, precisely, red.

Notice that McDowell does not say here merely an object is red *if and only if* it is such as to look red: he seems to be saying that its being red is *dependent* on that relation to possible experience. That is what makes this count as an anti-realist conception of redness. This conception of the mind-dependence of secondary qualities is widely shared, and it is not implausible to generalize it to provide an account of the mind-dependence which Kant claimed for every aspect of the world of which we can have knowledge.¹⁸

If we are to transpose this conception of mind-dependence to the case of representation in order to characterize an appropriate kind of representation-dependence, we need a reason for believing in the mind-dependence of secondary qualities which might carry across to representation. It is natural to think that belief in the mind-dependence of secondary qualities turns on a key feature of the philosophical notion of objectivity. A property or feature may be said to be *objective* in one or both of two senses. The first sense is metaphysical; we can define it like this:

(MO) Something is *metaphysically objective* if and only if its nature is wholly independent of any way of knowing it or thinking about it.

This is the sense in which to say that something is objective is to say that it is just there—that it is real, perhaps. But there is also an epistemic notion of objectivity. This is related to the idea of an objective (that is to say, impartial) witness, or an objective (that is to say, independent) proof. We can define it like this:

(EO) Something is *epistemically objective* if and only if knowledge of it does not depend on any particular mode of access.¹⁹

It is tempting, however, to restrict what is metaphysically objective to what is epistemically objective, and say this:

(ME) Something can only be *metaphysically objective* if it is *epistemically objective*.²⁰

Call someone who holds (ME), and accepts the restriction of the metaphysically objective to the epistemically objective, a *restrictor*, and the view in general *restriction*.²¹

We can see how restriction would lead to an anti-realist view of secondary qualities.²² The obvious difference between primary and secondary qualities, as we now conceive of

them, is that there is a special link between each secondary quality and one particular sense-modality, whereas there is no special association between any primary quality and any particular mode of access. That fact will be taken by a restrictor to provide grounds for denying the *metaphysical* objectivity of secondary qualities—grounds for claiming, in effect, that the very nature of secondary qualities involves some relation to experience. Taking the sense-specificity of secondary qualities to be grounds for denying their metaphysical objectivity is a move of restriction.

We have here two notions of objectivity and a restricting view in general metaphysics. We can make sense of something very similar in the specific field of artistic representation. First, there is a specific form of metaphysical objectivity:

(RMO) Something is *representationally metaphysically* objective if and only if its nature is wholly independent of any way of representing it.

Secondly, there is a specific form of epistemic objectivity:

(REO) Something is *representationally epistemically* objective if and only if knowledge of it does not depend on any particular mode of representation.

And, thirdly, we can make sense of a specific form of restriction, which would involve accepting this:

(RME) Something can only be representationally *metaphysically* objective if it is representationally *epistemically* objective.

The second anti-realist approach I want to consider claims two things: first, that there are some features of the way the object of a conspicuous representation is represented as being which are only accessible through the medium used in that representation; and second, that we should accept the restriction of the metaphysically objective to the epistemically

objective in the representational case. We might be tempted to elaborate the resulting view as follows. The basic virtue of conspicuous representation is that it enables us to see features of the world that we would not otherwise have seen. These are features which can only be seen by way of the medium used in the representation in question, and are hence acknowledged by the anti-realist to be in some way dependent on representation. But even though such features are dependent on representation, once we have come to see them through conspicuous representations our ordinary experience can be reshaped by them. Indeed, this reconfiguration enriches our ordinary experience, which helps to explain what is good about conspicuous representation.

There are two difficulties with this second anti-realist approach: first, restriction is problematic in the general case; and secondly, there is no coherent way of applying the morals of the general case to artistic representation which will resolve the puzzle created by (A) and (B).

Although it is tempting to adopt restriction—that is, (ME)—in the use of the notion of objectivity in general metaphysics, there seems good reason to worry about it. First, it relies on making a quick link between an epistemic and a metaphysical claim; and, as Saul Kripke has famously pointed out (1980: 34-39), claims of these kinds have different characters, and no quick moves between them are easily licensed. But secondly, particular grounds for hesitation are provided by the very case in which it seems most tempting—the case of secondary qualities. It is plausible to suggest that the particular metaphysically objective nature of certain qualities will ensure that particular sense-modalities are authoritative about them. It is natural to think, for example, that a sense-modality which is sensitive to light will be authoritative over at least some light-reflectance qualities: this has nothing to do with any dependence of these qualities on the sense-modality—it is just a matter of the metaphysically

objective nature of the qualities in question. So the special authority of a particular sense-modality about some quality is no grounds for thinking that the quality is dependent on that sense-modality. Both of these points make it natural to think that something could be metaphysically objective without being epistemically objective, in the general case.

And the idea of carrying an anti-realist approach across from general metaphysics to artistic representation looks problematic, when we look in detail at the features of things which representations in particular media might be thought to reveal to us. There are two obvious conceptions of such features. On one conception, they are features of real objects which we discover by considering what it is about objects which an artist is responding to. Call these *found* features: the idea is that the representation takes us back to the world to find there something we had not seen before. No quick examples of these found features can be provided, of course, and they will not have common names: these are, after all, features we can only be brought to see by means of artistic representations. The other obvious conception of features which artistic representations might be thought to reveal to us involves more or less explicit reference to the media of those representations. What an artistic representation might reveal to us is that a certain relatively ordinarily accessible feature of objects is *well captured* by a certain way of using the medium of representation. Call features like this *meta*-features: examples might be *being capturable in thick paint*, or *being definable by a single brush-stroke*.

Neither type of feature, however, provides helpful support for an anti-realist solution to the puzzle presented by (A) and (B). The problem in the case of *found* features is that the relevant form of anti-realism is implausible in their case. Anti-realism for the case of representation involves a claim that what is represented depends on the specific means of representation (rather than on thought or experience, as it would in the case of general

metaphysics). And it would be argued for by means of a move of restriction—that is, (RME)—on the basis of the claim that the relevant features are not representationally epistemically objective, because knowledge of them depends on a particular medium of representation.

The problem is that the claim that these features are not representationally epistemically objective seems clearly wrong. It is not only hard to sustain: it seems to miss the point of artistic representation—at least from the artist's point of view. First, there is no obvious reason to think that representational media are limited in what they can represent; so there is no reason to think that what can be represented in one medium cannot be represented in another. There seems no special problem with the idea that colours can be used to represent sounds, for example. And though it is sometimes thought that no words can capture what a picture gives us, this does not undermine the present point, since it is not clear that what a picture gives us is nothing but *features* of the objects represented (and no *other* words can capture what even a haiku gives us). But secondly, it is plausible that in the basic case of artistic representation the whole point is to represent what we can see independently is there in the world. In the basic case, the artist will have some real object before her, as the model for representation, and her challenge will be to represent in the medium of her art what she can see in the object when she looks away from the easel and towards it. Found features of objects seem to be representationally epistemically objective. It is true enough that restriction is unproblematic in their case; but that is only because the relevant anti-realism is implausible—which rules out an anti-realist solution to the problem posed by (A) and (B).

What I have called *meta*-features, by contrast, seem to be unproblematically representation-dependent—quite independently of any move of restriction—but what makes their representation-dependence unproblematic also makes it implausible that they provide

the basis for an explanation of the point of engaging with artistic representation in the first place. It is natural to think that seeing features of the world as *capturable in thick paint* or *definable by a single brush-stroke* will indeed enrich our experience, but that enrichment depends on an antecedent appreciation of what is good about capturing a feature like this in thick paint, or defining a feature like this by a single brush-stroke. And that ensures that an appeal to meta-features will enter the debate too late. The aim was to show that conspicuous representation is worthwhile because there is something distinctive which it enables us to understand. Features which we can only know by engaging with some particular medium of representation were supposed to be candidates for this distinctive thing which conspicuous representation enables us to understand. But although meta-features may be things which can only be understood through engaging with some representational medium, it cannot be because it enables us to understand *them* that conspicuous representation is worthwhile.

I have looked at the two obvious kinds of feature which conspicuous representations might be thought to reveal to us: found features and meta-features. I have provided no argument that all features which representations might reveal to us fall into one or other of these two categories, but it is not easy to think of any that do not. The problem is this: if we are to say that conspicuous representation is worthwhile because it reveals features of the world to us, the features it reveals must at least present themselves as representationally metaphysically objective. In that case, we will only be able to adopt an anti-realist solution to our problem—in effect, modifying or revising (A)—by denying that the features are representationally *epistemically* objective, and making some appeal to representational restriction. But in all readily imaginable cases, it is just not plausible to deny that the features in question are representationally epistemically objective, so we cannot get an anti-realist solution going.

5. The Form of a Better Solution

Our puzzle was that we apparently have good reason to accept two claims which seem to contradict each other:

- (A) Good conspicuous representations enable us to understand the world as it is in itself.
- (B) Conspicuous representations can only enable us to understand the world as it stands to their own means of representation.

We have just seen that modifying or revising (A) is problematic. In taking conspicuous representation seriously we are holding firmly to (B). We seem driven, then, to conclude that, despite initial appearances, (A) and (B) do not, in fact, contradict each other.

Happily, the conclusion we are driven to is also correct: there is no contradiction here. The quickest way of seeing this is to combine our two propositions in a third:

- (C) Conspicuous representations enable us to understand the world as it is in itself *as it stands to their own means of representation.*

I think this third proposition characterizes in outline the point of conspicuous representation—and ultimately the point of engaging in artistic representation in the first place.

(C) may be a little bewildering at first reading. To make sense of it we need to distinguish between two things:

- (i) The *object* (in a generous sense) of the understanding provided by conspicuous representations;
- (ii) What conspicuous representations enable us to understand about that object.

What I am calling a *generous* sense of the notion of an object of understanding is a sense which precisely does not limit it in the way proposed by the first anti-realist response considered in the last section. That response distinguished between the *object* of representation and the *way that object is represented as being*. The generous sense makes no such distinction. So in the Rembrandt self-portrait, the hat may be counted as (part of) the object of understanding in the generous sense—but so may the hat’s being a hat, the hat’s being made of cloth of a certain texture, the hat’s being white, the hat’s having a fold across it, and so on. Anything which, using an everyday conception of representation, we might ordinarily think a representation represents about something in the real world counts as the *object* of the understanding provided by that representation, in this generous sense. (I will come back to this ‘ordinary’ conception of representation at the end of the next section.)

Now we can explain (C). In (C) (and (A)), the phrase ‘the world as it is in itself’ characterizes what I am here calling the *object* (in the generous sense) of the understanding provided by conspicuous representations—that is, (i)—and the phrase ‘as it stands to their own means of representation’ characterizes *what conspicuous representations enable us to understand about that object*—that is, (ii) (as it does also in (B)). I think the distinction between (i) and (ii) is what gives conspicuous representation—and, indeed, artistic representation in general—its basic point.

The problem comes when we take the ‘as’ in both (A) and (B) to characterize *features* of whatever real thing is represented. The anti-realist solution considered in the last section failed because it did not question that assumption. What that failure shows is that what is special about artistic representation, in the basic case, is not that it provides us with access to something in the world which is not available to us otherwise; but that it gives us a special

kind of understanding of aspects of the world which are in principle available independently of representation.

6. The Matter of the Solution

(C), as it has been elaborated, shows us how it is formally possible to solve the problem of conspicuous representation. But this approach will not be convincing without some substantial account of the kind of understanding of the world as it is in itself which conspicuous representation might be thought to provide (what I have just separated as (ii)).

We are looking for a kind of understanding which is provided by conspicuous representation just as such—independently of any expressive or gustatory virtues it might have. And we are looking for something that might apply to conspicuous representation in any medium. The key relation seems to be between the real object (in the generous sense) which is represented and the medium in which the conspicuous representation represents it. We are familiar with the idea of objects of representation: they are what are represented by particular representations. For our purposes, we need to understand them as the things or features of the *real* world which are represented. (After all, we are not concerned with what can be ‘seen-in’ a painting.) To get what we want, I think we need the idea of an *object of a representational medium*: an object of a representational medium is a real thing or feature (or thing with its features) which is a *possible* object of representation within that medium. So everything which is actually represented in a given medium is an object of that medium, but not every object of a medium has actually been represented by any representation constructed in the medium.

We can now use this notion to propose a simple development of (Cog), our initial cognitivism about conspicuous representation. Here is what I propose:

(Cog2) The basic virtue of a conspicuous representation is that it reveals what it represents *as the object of its own medium of representation*.

I want first (in this section) to explain in more detail how this should be understood: that should make clear how it is the *conspicuousness* of conspicuous representation which does the work. After that (in the next section) I will make clear how what is revealed is nevertheless something about the world as it is in itself which we can have reason to be interested in, quite independently of any interest in representation as such.

The importance of the idea of an object of a medium of representation, in the sense just explained, can be seen by considering representation from the artist's point of view. When a representational artist sets about representing something in the real world, she is constantly aware of that thing as presenting distinctive challenges and opportunities for representation within her medium of representation: in fact, this is precisely what makes representation interesting for the artist. These challenges and opportunities are presented by the object precisely as an *object of the medium*, in the sense I have explained. What the artist produces is a response to those challenges and opportunities, and the resulting representation reflects the challenges and opportunities themselves, as well as the choices the artist has made in response to them. When we understand the way the medium has been used in a particular representation—the way the paint has been applied with a brush in the hat in the Rembrandt self-portrait, for example—we are understanding the object of representation—that real cloth hat, for example—as presenting those challenges and opportunities for representation in the medium, the challenges and opportunities to which this particular way of using the medium is a response. Sometimes the use of a medium can be self-effacing: this can happen either when an effort is made to prevent the medium calling attention to itself, or when the use of the medium follows some over-familiar formula. When the use of a medium

is self-effacing, it is easy not to notice that the object of representation—the real thing represented by the use of the medium—presents distinctive challenges and opportunities for representation in the medium. But when the use of the medium calls attention to itself—when it is conspicuous, in our sense—we are forced to reconsider the relation between the medium and the object of representation, and to be aware once again of the object as an *object of the medium*: that is, as something which presents distinctive challenges and opportunities for representation in that medium.

Being aware of something as an object of the medium is a kind of modal awareness—an awareness of the object as presenting certain possibilities. It is also an awareness of a distinctive kind, which is captured by the use of ‘as’ in a phrase like ‘awareness of the thing *as* an object of the medium’. In general, when we say that a representation reveals something *as being* a certain way, what is thereby said to be revealed cannot be captured by means of the most obviously corresponding ‘that’-clause. If a representation reveals something *as being* φ , more is involved than its simply revealing *that* the relevant thing is φ . For example, the brushwork in the Rembrandt self-portrait reveals the real hat which it represents *as* made of cloth; but this involves more than merely *that* the hat is made of cloth: the clothiness, so to speak, is, in a certain sense, made present to us. We might put this point by saying that in general the content of what is revealed about the real world by a representation is not *simply propositional*. It may in the end (perhaps) be possible to capture this content by means of ‘that’-clauses,²³ but we will need an indefinite number of them, and this ‘that’-clause expression must strike us as derivative: in the case of Rembrandt’s hat, for example, we are first of all presented with the clothiness of the hat, which we can then characterize extensively (perhaps limitlessly) by means of sentences suited to fill ‘that’-clauses.²⁴

The same point applies to the way in which conspicuous representation reveals something *as* the object of the medium: it does not merely reveal *that* the thing is an object of the medium, or *that* it presents this or that challenge for representation in the medium. A full range of challenges and opportunities presented by the thing²⁵—which include, of course, the challenges and opportunities presented by the qualities of the thing—is laid open for contemplation and perpetual revisiting. This does not preclude the possibility of it striking us immediately that this or that feature is difficult or interesting to capture in the medium, but these propositional judgements always appear against a wider background of the thing's simply appearing as being open to representation in an indefinite number of ways.²⁶

This is why it is important to insist on the indexical in the key phrase in (Cog2). A particular piece of conspicuous representation will always reveal what it represents as presenting challenges and opportunities for *its own* medium of representation, and it is only from within the perspective of the medium itself that we can be sure that exactly the right indefinite range of possibilities is presented. We may be able to capture a good deal of that range of possibilities from the point of view of another medium—by describing in words, for example, the task which an artist faces in representing some feature of the real world in a non-verbal medium—but we cannot expect to capture the same range of possibilities from that external perspective. (In general, we would expect a commentary in words to help us to get into the point of view of a non-verbal medium, so that we are then able to understand a representation made in that medium from the inside, as it were.)

This means that the understanding provided by conspicuous representation, on this proposal, will be essentially perspectival. But it does not follow that what is thereby understood is perspectival. The object of the understanding is nothing less than the real thing which is represented, including all its objective qualities. What conspicuous representation

enables us to understand is nothing less than the world as it is in itself—as it presents challenges and opportunities for representation in its own medium of representation.

It seems to me that this is a plausible account of what we actually get from conspicuous representation. Two features in particular make it attractive. First, it makes sense of the feeling that we all have that a proper response to a great work of representational art involves dwelling with it. Because it makes the point of conspicuous representation to be to reveal what is represented as presenting an indefinite range of challenges and opportunities for representation within its own medium, the proposal makes a proper appreciation of conspicuous representation depend on appreciating something which provides indefinite space for lingering. And secondly, the proposed account makes sense of conspicuous representation from the artist's point of view, as much as from the point of view of the viewer, reader, or audience. For the representational artist's concern is precisely to consider and confront the challenges for representation which the real world presents, and in taking the point of conspicuous representation to be to reveal those challenges, the proposal allows conspicuous representation to be a kind of record of the artist's achievement, through which her facing of the challenges can be relived.

What this solution to the puzzle presented by conspicuous representation depends on—like any other solution which resolves the puzzle by adopting something like (C)—is a distinction between *what* a representation represents (which may include all kinds of features of a thing) and the *perspective* from which it represents it. In this respect, the solution endorses what we may think of as an ordinary conception of representation. But there is a certain not-quite-contemporary tendency in art criticism, to describe novels, for example, as being *about* the language in which they are written, or more generally, to describe all art as being *about* itself; and it is natural to take what a work is *about* to be what it *represents*.²⁷

Within this tendency, the distinction on which the solution to the puzzle depends will be hard to draw: if the medium of representation is conspicuous, it will be tempting to think that it is part of what the work is *about*, and hence part of what it *represents*.

We need not engage in the uncertain business of linguistic legislation, but we have a clear reason for preferring to stick to the ordinary conception of representation, and to resist this extension of the term. For this extension precisely smears together things which need to be kept apart if we are to solve the problem of conspicuous representation; and we have no general reason to think that if something is conspicuous in a representation it is really what the representation represents.

7. Meeting the Demands of the Generality Assumption

We have an account which formally removes the puzzle which conspicuous representation presents, and which seems to characterize what actually matters to us about conspicuous representation. What is not yet clear is how this account meets the generality assumption on its ambitious reading, and that assumption, so understood, was crucial in the initial setting up of the problem.

The generality assumption was this: understanding the basic virtue of conspicuous representation will enable us to explain something of the point of engaging in and with artistic representation in the first place. And the ambitious reading of it arose from a sense that there is a serious point in artistic representation. Specifically, what it requires is this: artistic representation does something whose value can be acknowledged without engaging in or with artistic representation. We will have done at least enough if we can show these two things:

- (1) The value of understanding something as presenting challenges and opportunities for representation within a medium is a basic value of artistic representation in general;
- (2) The value of understanding something as presenting challenges and opportunities for representation within a medium is a value whose value status can be acknowledged without engaging in or with artistic representation.

I will not attempt to provide a decisive argument for (1) here, but I will deal with one obvious worry. Someone might think that conspicuous representation—representation which calls attention to the medium of representation—is unusual, and its appreciation the preserve of a certain kind of aesthetic sophisticate. But in fact, I think, all representation, in any sense which is at all relevant to artistic representation,²⁸ is conspicuous: all such representation calls attention to the medium of representation to some degree. To identify certain representations as conspicuous representations is not to contrast them with representations which are not conspicuous at all, but to mark them as conspicuous *as among* representations, conspicuous even for representations.

To see this, let us take in particular the case of *trompe l'oeil* painting, which is often thought to be problematic for theories of representation which emphasize the importance of being aware of the medium of representation.²⁹ Consider, to begin with, a *trompe l'oeil* violin painted on the back of a door in a great house. If you look across the room when the door is closed, you think there is a violin hanging on the back of the door. And then, when the door is opened, you see that the violin is a painted violin, and there is no real violin there. It might be thought that the effect here depends on the medium being so self-effacing as to be invisible: depends, that is, on the representation being completely inconspicuous. But I described two moments: a moment of illusion, when we simply think there is a violin hanging

on the back of a door; and a moment of realization, when we see that it is a painted violin. I take it that when we are under the illusion we are not appreciating the painting as art, or as a representation: we have no idea, after all, that it is art, or is any kind of representation. So it is natural to think that we need to consider instead the moment, after the door has opened, when we gaze in wonder that flat paint can be made to seem so like a violin leaning out at an angle from a peg on the back of a door. This is the moment when we acknowledge and appreciate the painting as a representation, and the appreciation depends on a full consciousness of the limitations of the medium—in particular the flatness of the painted surface—for representing something like a violin. It seems to me that even in this simple case what we value is the sense of the painting's having met a challenge posed by the real object represented, and what we come to understand about the real object represented is precisely the way its character presents a challenge for the medium of representation.

The key point here is that representation of any kind which is relevant to art is not illusion, and recognizing that something is a representation is precisely not being subject to any illusion.³⁰ That means that we can set aside as irrelevant to our concerns a different kind of *trompe l'oeil* painting, whose purpose is not, like the *trompe l'oeil* violin just considered, to be discovered, but precisely to remain concealed. We might think here of certain architectural *trompe l'oeil* effects, whose business is to give the illusion of more space than there is, or that a building is made of different materials from those of which it is actually made. The value of this illusionistic kind of *trompe l'oeil* painting lies just in the instrumental value of the effects created by the illusion, which seems clearly distinct from any value of artistic representation.

Of course, there are particular examples of architectural *trompe l'oeil* painting whose status is ambiguous: either it is indeterminate whether they are representational or

illusionistic, or they are in some way both representational and illusionistic. But this does not undermine the central point, that insofar as something is a representation, in any sense which is relevant to artistic representation, it calls attention to its own medium of representation to some degree. There is therefore no reason to deny that all representations of the relevant kind are conspicuous, to some extent at least. So the obvious worry about (1) can be dealt with.

Now to (2). First of all, we need to remember that we are working within the framework of a distinction which was introduced before (in section 5)—between these two things:

- (i) The *object* (in a generous sense) of the understanding provided by conspicuous representations;
- (ii) What conspicuous representations enable us to understand about that object.

So to establish (2), we need to show that the *object*, in the generous sense, of the understanding provided by conspicuous representations is something we have an interest in understanding, independently of representation; and that the kind of understanding of that object which conspicuous representation provides is a kind whose value we can understand without engaging in representation.

I suggest that the *object* of the understanding provided by conspicuous representations is just this: the qualitative character of the real world—or of whatever it is in the real world that the representations represent. Conspicuous representations help us to understand what things are *like*. In describing the fact that the brushwork in the painting of Rembrandt's hat reveals the hat *as* made of cloth it was natural to say this: the *clothiness* of the hat is made present to us. This seems to me exactly what conspicuous representation does in general, whatever kind of thing it might be that is represented: a tragedy, for example, might reveal the qualitative character of grief—what grief is like—and a poem what it is like to be in love.

It is not just that conspicuous representation enables us to understand the qualitative character of the world: it is plausible to think that it is the *conspicuousness* of conspicuous representation which does the work, if the account I offered in the last section is correct. It is helpful to compare what is provided by conspicuous representation with what is revealed to the eye of the engineer. If we look at the world with the eye of an engineer, we consider what we look at both in terms of its possible contribution to practical goals we might have, and in terms of the possible differences to it which different interventions of ours might make. What is thereby revealed is the practical or causal character of the world. According to the account presented in the last section, if we look at the world with the eye of a painter—or of a representational artist more generally—our concern is at least one stage further removed from the practical and causal. We do not consider the world in terms of the differences to it which our interventions might make, and we consider it only in terms of the challenges and opportunities it provides for representation, rather than for any practical goal. What is left when we abstract from the practical and causal character of things? We seem bound to say: just their qualitative character—their look or their feel.

It seems clear that we have a concern with this qualitative character quite independently of any concern with representation. At the simplest level, we are just interested in the way things look and the way things feel. It is also plausible to suggest that an understanding of the qualitative character of things is a necessary prerequisite to every kind of further understanding. This is true not only of the kind of understanding pursued by engineering, which is naturally thought to be framed by an interest in the qualitative character of things, but also for the understanding of the meaning of things which is bound up with all our valuations.

Our account seems able, then, to provide the first part of what was needed for (2): it gives us an *object* of the understanding provided by conspicuous representation which we have an interest in quite independently of representation. But why should we value the understanding of it which conspicuous representation provides? It is not as if we have no other access to the qualitative character of the world. Rather, what conspicuous representation does is enable us to hold the qualitative character of things in view, so that we can explore it indefinitely as we pursue the range of possibilities for representation that a particular conspicuous representation reveals to us. Different representational media will offer different opportunities for exploration of the same qualitative character of things, since the same qualitative character will present different challenges to different media. Different opportunities for exploration will be provided even by different kinds of conspicuous representation within the same medium, since we will not always be aware of every possibility for a given medium, and new ways of representing show us new possibilities.

Seen in this way, artistic representation plays a role in relation to the qualitative character of things which is analogous to the role which experiment plays in relation to the causal and practical character of the world. And *conspicuous* representation provides an understanding of the qualitative character of the world which is analogous to the understanding of the world's causal and practical character which is provided by experimental *experience*. In both cases the understanding which is gained is an understanding of the world as it stands in relation to some project of our own. But this does not mean that it is anything less than the world as it is in itself that is understood: that is the point of the distinction between (i) and (ii). And it is not as if this understanding of the world as it stands to a project of ours is a poor second-best to the understanding which would be gained by just considering an object, and not considering it in relation to anything else. In fact, an attempt to understand the world without considering how it stands to some project of

ours would provide no significant understanding at all: it would be little more than a blank stare. If it is the qualitative character of the world which we aim to understand, and if we aim for more than a blank stare can provide, it is hard to see what could provide the understanding we want—other than conspicuous representation.³¹

The proposal is, then, that the basic virtue of conspicuous representation is that it enables us to understand the world as it is in itself as it stands to the medium of representation; and that the reason why that is a virtue is that what the relation to the medium of representation reveals about the world is its qualitative character, which is something for which we have a concern quite independently of any interest in representation, but which we can only contemplate and explore in its relation to some medium of representation.

8. Realism

An obvious moral for the general issue of realism arises out of this discussion. We saw that the problem of conspicuous representation depended on the apparent tension between the following two claims:

- (A) Good conspicuous representations enable us to understand the world as it is in itself;
- (B) Conspicuous representations can only enable us to understand the world as it stands to their own means of representation.

And we saw the obvious structural similarity between this apparent tension and the apparent tension which the Kantian uses to undermine traditional realism—the tension, that is, between *these* two claims:

- (A*) Our ways of knowing enable us to understand the world as it is in itself;³²

(B*) Our ways of knowing can only enable us to understand the world as it stands them.

But we found that a revision of (A) in a Kantian spirit looked implausible. That led us to find a way of recognizing that (A) and (B) do not, in fact, contradict each other. The compatibility of (A) and (B) was expressed in this claim:

(C) Conspicuous representations enable us to understand the world as it is in itself *as it stands to their own means of representation.*

In the last two sections I have been offering an interpretation of the italicized clause here which aims to make sense of (C), and hence to make good the thought that (A) and (B) are compatible.

But if (A) and (B) do not contradict each other, then why should we think that (A*) and (B*) contradict each other either? If they do not, the Kantian reason for denying (A*) seems to disappear. It looks as if we should be able to make sense of a thoroughgoing realism of a fairly traditional kind if we can make sense of this:

(C*) Our ways of knowing enable us to understand the world as it is in itself *as it stands to our ways of knowing.*

In order to do that, we would need a substantial interpretation of the italicized clause here which would make sense of (C*). That must be a task for another occasion. In the meantime, we have an answer to the question why we should be interested in artistic representation in the first place.

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NOTES

¹ The example is Wollheim's own (Wollheim 1987: 46), although in his case the boy is 'seen-in' a stain on a wall.

² The issue here corresponds to Goodman's identification of two uses of a phrase like 'painting of a woman': for one use (the one relevant to my concerns) there must be a real woman of whom the painting is a painting; for the other (the one relevant to 'seeing-in') there need not be (Goodman: 1976: 21-23). See also (Budd 1993: 154-5).

³ This is not to deny that there are differences, of course: for example, a woman 'seen-in' a painting seems more obviously to be an object of experience than a character in a novel is.

⁴ This point also distinguishes my concerns from those which dominate Michael Podro's discussions of depiction in his (1998)—despite Podro's particular interest in Rembrandt.

⁵ Hopkins's principal examples are also mentioned by Podro (1998: 16): a drawing, and later an etching, by Rembrandt of Jan Cornelius Sylvius. Podro is interested in these pictures as examples of depictions which lead us 'to reflect on and re-imagine the transition between the actuality of the medium and the represented subject', and he explicitly describes the 'represented subject' as 'fictive'.

⁶ We can also set aside another issue that might muddy the waters here (as in other similar examples). It is sometimes said that this painting is unfinished. Whatever exactly it is for a painting to be unfinished, the issue can only affect things that might depend on the artist's intention—perhaps here what the brushwork might be thought to express. But we have just seen that expression is irrelevant, and nothing about the artist's intention matters for our problem beyond the fact that he meant to put those brushstrokes there (even if he also expected to paint over them later).

⁷ This means, of course, that if narrative fictions are counted as representational art, they will have to be regarded as representing things in the real world (and not just fictional characters and their doings). This seems plausible enough anyway, though the real things in question are likely to be general: love, grief, and betrayal are obvious examples.

⁸ It should, then, give us some purchase on what Dominic McIver Lopes calls 'the puzzle of mimesis' (Lopes 2005). But my problem is more general than Lopes's 'puzzle of mimesis': it arises for forms of representation other than depiction. Furthermore, framing it does not require commitment *either* to anything like Lopes's 'mimesis thesis'—according to which 'pictures typically elicit experiences as of the scenes they depict, which

experiences resemble, in important respects, face-to-face experiences of the same scenes’—*or* to anything like Lopes’s ‘pictorial evaluation thesis’—according to which ‘to evaluate a picture as a picture is, in part, to evaluate it as eliciting experiences of the scene it depicts’ (Lopes 2005: 20).

⁹ This follows John McDowell’s conception of philosophical ‘How possible?’ questions (McDowell 1996: xiii).

¹⁰ The idea that *understanding* is the cognitive state which art is meant to produce is championed by, for example, Catherine Elgin (2002)—though it is anyway natural.

¹¹ This is what I think Podro misses, when he says: ‘The artists whose work will concern us did not set out to show the look of the world as something previously known, but rather to extend the thread of recognition in new and complex structures of their own’ (1998: vii). By ‘extending the thread of recognition’ Podro means something like: extending the range of depictions ‘in’ which we can ‘see’ familiar things—using ‘seeing-in’ here in Wollheim’s sense.

¹² Compare the claim of Podro’s quoted in the previous footnote (Podro 1998: vii). Important and interesting though ‘extending the thread of recognition’ in his sense is, it is not important or interesting enough for the ambitious understanding of the generality thesis.

¹³ This is obviously a technical definition of the phrase, but the wider sense, more obviously reminiscent of Kant, should not be forgotten, and will be relevant to sections 4 and 8. What do I mean ‘altogether independently of representation’? I mean: with no dependence of any kind (causal, conceptual, constitutive, or whatever) on representation.

¹⁴ That is, the ‘metaphysical’ interpretations (whether ‘two-’ or ‘one-world’ interpretations)—as opposed to Henry Allison’s ‘epistemological’ interpretation (Allison 1983). In fact, we will be looking in particular to ‘one-world’ interpretations for the case of artistic representation, since everyone accepts that something of what is represented is independent of artistic representation.

¹⁵ This kind of ‘one-world’ interpretation is suggested by (Kant 1997: B306); it also seems to be assumed, e.g., at (Goodman 1978: 6).

¹⁶ This is the kind of ‘one-world’ interpretation suggested by Rae Langton (Langton 1998)—more particularly as adapted by Lucy Allais (Allais 2006).

¹⁷ Of course, we must acknowledge that some features represented in some works are not altogether independent of representation. Some works involve what we may call *reflexive* representations: that is, representations which are concerned to represent features of their own medium of representation—paintings in which painters

are at work painting, for example. But as long as we keep to a reasonably ordinary conception of what works of art may be taken to be representing (and again, I will return to the issue of that ordinary conception later) reflexive representations, in this sense, cannot be the basic case; and this second anti-realist approach does not rely on the special case of reflexive representation. (It might be noted that Podro's discussion of the Rembrandt self-portrait which has provided our central example focusses primarily on the fact that it is a piece of reflexive representation: 'we see the depicted Rembrandt seeing himself in the very painting that is the condition of our seeing him' (Podro 1998: 103).)

¹⁸ This is argued in (Allais 2007).

¹⁹ This notion of objectivity seems to be of central importance in Thomas Nagel's (1986), for example.

²⁰ I take it that the converse of (ME) is relatively uncontroversial.

²¹ It is tempting to think that this kind of restriction of the metaphysically objective to the epistemically objective provides some of the motivation for reductive physicalism—the view that physics describes all the facts: the assumption being that the physical is above all epistemically objective.

²² It is not exactly clear what underlies McDowell's own anti-realism about secondary qualities. One motivation seems to be the simple intuition that secondary qualities are 'essentially phenomenal' (1985: 113). If this is not itself an assumption of anti-realism, then 'essentially phenomenal' means something like *essentially qualitative*. The question would then be why the essentially qualitative should be understood anti-realistically, and it is at least arguable that a move of restriction is what does the work. But there is also a hint of an independent use of restriction. McDowell says that to adopt a primary-quality model of fearfulness would be to think that fearfulness itself is 'intelligible from a standpoint independent of the propensity to fear' (1985: 120-121); and this looks like the claim that fearfulness is not *epistemically* objective, which would then be the first step in an argument that relied on restriction.

²³ I use the word 'capture' here in order to rule out trivializing reductions of content to what can be expressed in a 'that'-clause. A trivializing reduction of the content of Rembrandt's representation of the hat as being made of cloth might take the following form: 'the picture shows that the hat is made of cloth like *that*'—where the final 'that' accompanies a pointing to the picture itself. I take this not to *capture* the content, since the content is only explained by appeal to the picture.

²⁴ Note that there is no immediate incompatibility between this and Scruton's claim, 'Representation ... is essentially propositional' (Scruton 1998: 72)—although in fact I think that claim is false.

²⁵ I say cautiously ‘a full range’, rather than ‘the full range’, because different ways of painting (for example) naturally provoke us to think of different ranges of challenges and opportunities.

²⁶ This echoes Kant’s thought that in the pure judgement of beauty ‘the powers of cognition ... are ... in free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition’ (Kant 2000: 5:217).

²⁷ For an extreme, and completely generalized, version of this, consider Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s claim that ‘In a sense language never has anything to do with anything but itself’ (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 115).

²⁸ The principal purpose of this qualifying phrase is to prevent the application of the claim to anything which someone who regards all intentionality as representational would count as a representation. In particular, it is not meant to apply to ordinary perception of the ordinary real world.

²⁹ Wollheim, for example, thinks that *trompe l’oeil* paintings do not involve the ‘two-foldedness’ of ‘seeing-in’, and so are not strictly speaking representations: Wollheim (1987: 62) (supported by Lopes (2005: 38)). John Hyman disagrees (Hyman 2006: 132-3).

³⁰ Despite some ambivalence Ernst Gombrich, accepts that illusion sometimes plays a role (Gombrich 2002).

³¹ It is natural to think here of the compulsive desire of the wine-lover to find a way of *describing* the complex harmony of flavours which she finds in a great wine.

³² Once again, of course, the phrase ‘world as it is in itself’ is to be understood here in its usual general sense.